

Strategies for Avoiding Sexual Assault

Even if you are cautious, you cannot be vigilant 24 hours a day. Although there is no perfect way to completely protect yourself against rape, the following ideas may help.

Assertive Behavior

- Awareness and assertive behavior may be your best defenses against becoming an “easy victim.”
- Real anger instead of fear may not be expected by a would-be attacker and may throw him off-guard.
- If approached by someone you sense to be a potential threat, try to stay out of reach.
- Report suspicious or criminal activity to the police immediately.
- If you feel you are in danger of being attacked, try to escape the situation by running away if you can.
- Head for a well-lighted place where there are other people who may be able to help you.
- Try in any way you can to attract attention to yourself. Scream. “CALL 911!”
- Take a self-defense course.
- Trust your instincts. If a person, place, or situation makes you uneasy, leave immediately.
- Use common sense. If it seems or feels risky, it probably is.



Reducing Your Risk on Dates

- Find out more about your date. Go beyond the basics. Ask about his feelings towards women and relationships. If he is someone you do not know, arrive separately and meet in a public place.
- Be assertive. Speak up if a situation makes you uncomfortable. Make it clear that paying for a meal does not entitle him to anything else, or offer to pay your own way.
- Don't allow yourself to be isolated with someone you don't know or trust.
- Set your own limits and communicate these limits to your date.
- Trust your feelings. If something doesn't feel right, or if you just feel pressured or frightened, listen to yourself.

Reducing Your Risk at Home

- Make sure your home has a door viewer and a dead bolt lock.
- Make sure all entrances are well lighted.
- Never hide a key over a door or in a flower pot or another obvious place.
- Never put your first name on the mailbox or in the phone book and be cautious about revealing personal information over the phone or internet.
- Never admit strangers or unwanted acquaintances to your home under any circumstances. Talk to them through the locked door.
- Keep your blinds and curtains closed at night.

Reducing Your Risk at Parties

- When you go to a party or club, go with friends. Arrive together, watch out for each other, and leave together.
- Don't leave your beverage unattended or accept a drink from an open container.
- Keep a clear head. Overuse of alcohol or drugs can decrease your awareness and make you more vulnerable.
- Don't leave with a stranger, no matter how attractive or persuasive he may be.

Reducing Your Risk in the Car

- Always lock your car when leaving and entering it.
- Look in the back seat before entering your car.
- Have your keys in hand so you do not have to search for them.
- If you are driving to another city, try and carry a cell phone that has a wide calling area so you can call for help if you are stranded.
- If you have car trouble, raise your hood, lock yourself in, and wait for the police or call for help, if you have a cell phone with you.
- Do not stop to help a stranded motorist; use your cell phone or stop at the nearest phone and call the police.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, drive to the nearest public place and blow your horn.
- Keep your car well-serviced, with good tires, a spare and plenty of gas.

Reducing Your Risk on the Street

- When walking alone, act self-assured and confident that you know where you are going.
- Walk on the traffic side of sidewalks, not close to alleyways and bushes.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, cross the street, or walk quickly to a well-lit, well-populated location.
- Wear sensible clothing and shoes which allow you to maneuver or run.
- Don't load yourself down with packages, bags, books, etc... You will appear vulnerable.
- Stay alert and aware. Turn around and look at whoever may be behind you.
- If you walk or jog for exercise, try to vary your route or time on the street. Predictable behavior is risky.

Sexual assault occurs most frequently in the following places:

- 34 percent in the victim's home or yard
- 20 percent in the perpetrator's home or yard
- 12 percent in someone else's home or yard
- 7 percent in the victim and perpetrator's home or yard
- 7 percent in rural area, woods, park, or campground
- 5 percent in a car


Kilpatrick, D.G., Edmunds, C.M. & Seymour, A. (1992). Rape in America: A report to the nation. National Victim Center and Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center.

If You Are Raped

- Get to a safe place.
- Go directly to a hospital emergency room, report the attack and ask to be examined. Medications to prevent pregnancy and treat sexually transmitted infections should be available. If you are concerned about having been drugged, a toxicology kit can also be completed that may be able to detect rape drugs.
- In order for the hospital to collect evidence, you must report the sexual assault to the police. If you want evidence to be collected do not: bathe, douche or brush your teeth. Washing can destroy evidence. If you wear the clothing you were assaulted in to the hospital, take a change of clothes. Your clothing will be taken as evidence.
- If you do file a police report, you can file for crime victims' compensation to cover certain costs you may incur. A victims' compensation claim must be filed within 3 years of the assault.
- Get support. No matter what decisions you make, know that you have done the best you can. Take advantage of all the resources available to you. You can reach your local rape crisis center by calling the RAINN hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE or visiting our website (www.taasa.org).

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 *The voice of sexual violence survivors in Texas.*



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www.taasa.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
Free. Confidential. 24/7.

1-800-656-HOPE